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Record

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No. 1

State Evangelism Conference 'best ever'

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The talk in the corridors of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo carried a common theme, as one attending pastor said: "This year's evangelism conference is the best ever." Many others echoed his sentiments.

Mississippi Baptist pastors, staff, and laypeople gathered at Harrisburg Church on January 27-28 for the 2003 State Evangelism Conference sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

Running concurrently with the traditional evangelism conference was a first-time women's track, sponsored by the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). Participants in both conferences were encouraged, inspired, and motivated by a diverse array of speakers and musicians.

The January 27 afternoon session opened with music by Reggie and Ladye Smith of Nashville, long-time conference favorites, both of whom have Mississippi roots. Sonny Adkins, MBCB Evangelism Director; Forrest Sheffield, pastor of the host church; and Larry Otis, mayor of Tupelo and an active participant in Baptist work around the state, all offered welcomes.

Rick Green, minister of music at First Church, Madison, led the congregation in worship. Danny Lanier, evangelist from Little Rock, Miss., preached from John 14, painting a word picture of heaven and the glories awaiting believers there.

Richard Jackson, former pastor of North Phoenix Church, Phoenix, Ariz., and currently director of the Jackson



CALL TO COMMITMENT - Richard Jackson (standing) of the Jackson Center for Evangelism in Brownwood, Texas, offers encouragement and prayer at the altar to pastors and others during the January 27 evening session at the 2003 State Evangelism Conference at Harrisburg Church, Tupelo. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Center for Evangelism, Brownwood, Tex., used a marked New Testament his center has developed to show conferees how this copy of the Scriptures could be used as a witnessing tool.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, Ark., concluded the afternoon session by preaching on Ground Zero, illustrating from the World Trade Center attack. "Have you ever been to ground zero in your ministry?" he asked. "No man can rob you of God's purposes. His will cannot be thwarted."

The evening session included music by Harrisburg's choir, led by minister of music Aaron Tones. Preaching to a packed sanctuary, Floyd drew from Acts 6 and 7.

The Smiths led praise for the January 28 morning session. Steve and Becky Carver, evangelists from Mathiston; Ray Walker, Pontotoc; and Steve Walker, Pinola, led in worship. Don Taylor, evangelist from Conehatta, preached from 2 Samuel 9.

Jay Strack, founder and president of Student Leadership University, Orlando, Fla., closed the morning session by sharing from Habakkuk 4:1-5.

Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Church, Plano, Tex., and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, preached from Matthew 16. "We are so consumed with our little stuff here on earth that we don't get the big picture, the big heart of God for His kingdom."

The final afternoon session opened with praise from the Smiths and worship led by Slater Murphy, minister of music at Fairview Church, Columbus. Graham and Strack offered the closing messages.

The State Evangelism Conference is funded annually by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program. The 2004 conference is scheduled for January 26-27 at Country Woods Church, Jackson.



OFFERING PRAISE - Music evangelists Reggie (right) and Ladye Smith of Nashville lead worship during the January 27 State Evangelism Conference at Harrisburg Church, Tupelo. The Smiths are both Mississippi natives. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

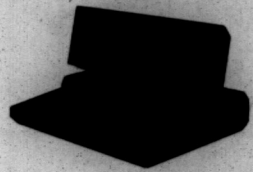
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Understanding our limitations

Another seven lives have been lost, and another space shuttle has been reduced to jagged, smoldering rubble. As we watched the tragedy unfold before our eyes once again, many people undoubtedly experienced flashbacks to that terrible day in 1986 when the space shuttle Challenger went down during launch from Florida. We've been here before, and we don't like it any better this time around.

At times like these, videotape has to be one of the curses of the modern age. With videotape we can view the awful events of February 1 over and over again, as we have viewed the events of September 11, 2001, over and over again. One has to wonder about the long-term effects of such repetitious instant replay on the psychological and emotional health of individuals — especially children — and the nation as a whole.

Shuttle launches and landings have become so routine that they are taken for granted by most folks. As it turns out, the launches and landings and missions of the space shuttle have become that way not because the danger has been wrung from the process, but due to the incredible knowledge and skill of the people involved. It's difficult for laypeople to understand just how dicey is each space shot, regardless of the safety measures. It all looks so finely crafted and well done.

Perhaps now is a good time to step back for a moment to look at the bigger picture — and again realize our human limitations.

Exploration has always been dangerous, whether it was on the high seas in search of a New World, across the frigid crevasses of the Arctic in search of the North Pole, or in the cramped cockpit of a rocketship in search of the sound barrier.

When King David gazed upon the heavens and marveled at God's handiwork, he was expressing sentiments held long before his time and treasured to this very

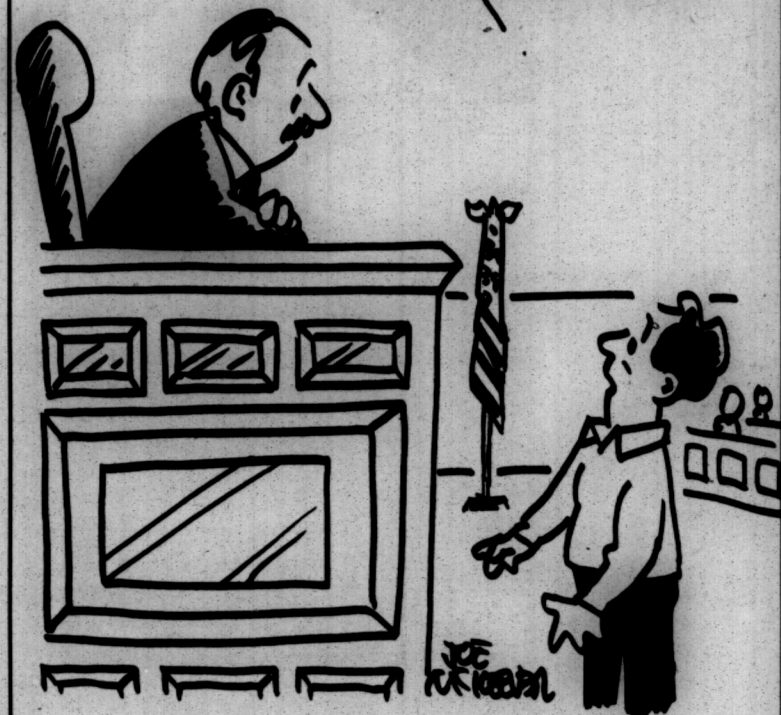
day. Who are we? From whence did we come? Where are we going? What is to become of us? All the attempts to expand the boundaries of our knowledge really boil down to a quest to discover such answers, don't they?

God has given us great minds with which to explore the wonders of our world and our existence in the universe. Of course, some people have turned their great minds into a repository for wicked thoughts — the Hollywood establishment comes to mind — but that certainly wasn't God's intent when he made us a little higher than the creatures and a little lower than the angels.

God gave us big brains and filled us with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. That's why we scale peaks and split atoms and map genomes. That's why the human lifespan has doubled since the days of the Roman Empire, and why we went from the wobbly flight of a few feet in North Carolina to globe-straddling jetliners and moon shots in less than 60 years.

A serious problem arises, however, when we begin to believe that our own knowledge and wisdom are as great as God's. That is certainly not what He intended, and we've been getting into trouble over this issue since the Garden of Eden. This is not intended to imply that the space shuttle program was designed to supplant God in our lives, but it is intended to point out that too many of us continue see the acquisition of such knowledge

"YOUR HONOR, I'M
FEELING A LITTLE LIKE
AMERICA RIGHT NOW—
IN DESPERATE NEED OF
SOMEBODY'S PRAYERS!"



not as a way to draw closer to God but as a way to put ourselves on a par with Him or even replace Him in our hearts and minds. The ancient Babylonians tried to do that, with limited success. How can we believe we will fare any better in our day?

Among our prayers after a such high-tech tragedy as the Columbia should be an acknowledgement before the Father of our own intellectual limitations and God's boundless knowledge. For all our sakes, may we never confuse the two.

Was one of your goals for the coming year to lose weight and keep it off? According to the Centers for Disease Control, there is a good chance this goal would benefit you since 61% of the U.S. population is overweight or obese.

Body weight that is higher than recommended for your body frame increases your risk of heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and orthopedic problems such as knee, hip, and back pain. Health experts agree that if you are overweight, losing as little as five to 10 percent of your body weight can have significant health benefits.

When we realize it's time to do something about our weight, many begin crazy diets and set unrealistic goals that may work for a while. Unfortunately, most people don't keep the weight off. This yo-yo cycle is discouraging but there is good news. It is possible to lose weight and keep it off. Successful "losers" have valuable lessons to share.

The National Weight Control Registry tracks the weight loss success of approximately 3,000 people who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for a year or more. Here are some suggestions for long-term success.

GUEST OPINION:



Losing a little helps a lot

By Branda Polk,
LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville

- **Keep a detailed food journal.** Recording the food and amount you eat raises the awareness of what you are actually eating. Studies have proven that most people underestimate the number of calories they eat by 500 to 1,000 calories per day, and the more overweight a person is the higher the miscalculation.

- **Keep a food journal.** A food journal is an excellent "reality check." Honestly record everything you eat for seven days. Note the amount and the specific food. Remember to include the taste tests from the grocery store, the piece of candy and the bites when preparing or cleaning up dinner. You may be shocked at the amount of mindless eating you do.

- **Weigh yourself once a week to check your progress.** Weighing more often does not give a true indication of weight

loss or weight gain. Set a specific time each week to weigh when the conditions are similar. Use other measurements of progress such as body measurements and the fit of your clothing. Changes can occur in your body that the scale may not register.

- **Eat small meals throughout the day.** Small, planned meals every three to four hours stabilize blood sugar levels and head off binge eating.

- **Eat breakfast every day.** Breakfast is the power meal of the day that kick-starts your metabolism. Eat within two hours of waking up. Include complex carbohydrates such as whole grain cereal or bread and protein sources such as milk or yogurt for a balanced start to your day. People who skip breakfast consume approximately 15% more calo-

ries throughout the day than those who eat a healthful breakfast.

- **Eat low-calorie, low-fat, complex-carbohydrate food — the most efficient and beneficial body fuel.** Examples include whole grain bread, rice, vegetables, legumes (such as kidney beans), oats, and barley.

- **Exercise regularly to fire up your metabolism.** Exercise has many benefits: burning additional calories, strengthening muscles, using stored fat for energy, reducing stress, warding off diseases, and increasing restful sleep time.

As believers, we can honor God when we properly care for the body he has given us. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." A solid weight loss and weight maintenance plan is not a quick fix or fad diet.

Begin a step-by-step approach to achieving your goals and establishing life-long habits.

Branda Polk is a certified personal trainer, wellness coach, and Fit 4 coordinator at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. For more information about wellness and health issues, check out www.fit4.com.

Astronauts recalled as strong Christians

HOUSTON (BP and local reports) - Astronauts Rick Husband and Michael Anderson were remembered in their home church Feb. 2 as men who fervently lived for God more than having achieved their childhood dreams of space flight.

Husband, age 45, commander of the Space Shuttle Columbia, and payload commander Anderson, age 43, were among the seven astronauts killed Feb. 1 when the spacecraft broke apart and disintegrated over north Texas just 16 minutes from landing.

Both astronauts attended Grace Community Church, an interdenominational church in the southeastern Houston suburb of Clear Lake.

"Rick and Mike were men who fervently lived for God," senior pastor Steve Riggle told thousands of mourners at three morning services Feb. 2, the AP reported. "We celebrate they are in the hands of the Lord."

Husband, father of a son and a daughter, sang in the choir at Grace Community and led a weekly prayer group for fathers called "Dads in the Gap," executive pastor Garrett Booth told The Washington Post. He had been a member for eight years.

Anderson, married with two

daughters, had been at the church for four years. Although described as "kind of quiet," The Post reported that Anderson - one of a few African-American astronauts - was aware of his status as a role model. The newspaper said he often spoke at schools, encouraging students to follow their dreams.

Anderson's parents are natives of Madison County, and the family still has relatives in the area. Michael Anderson, who considered Spokane, Washington, to be his hometown, lived in Canton for a short time during his childhood and sometimes

mission were played during the Feb. 2 services at Grace Community Church.

"If I ended up at the end of my life having been an astronaut, but having sacrificed my family along the way or living my life in a way that didn't glorify God, then I would look back on it with great regret," Husband said on the video. "Having become an astronaut would not really have mattered all that much, and I finally came to realize that what really meant the most to me was to try and live my life the way God wanted me to and to try and be a good hus-

don't think you have one without the other, unless when tragedy comes, you quit."

Recounting visits with the wives of both victims the evening the disaster occurred, Riggle told of Evelyn Husband showing the pastor documents her late husband had to sign in case of something tragic happening on the mission.

At the bottom of the documents, Husband wrote a special note to his pastor which said, "Tell them about Jesus. He means everything to me," Riggle recounted.

Many Johnson Space Center employees wore their identification badges on lanyards around their necks to the services, the Chronicle reported.



Husband



Anderson



IN MEMORIUM - A flag is placed by an anonymous donor in the median of a highway just north of Palestine, Texas, at the site where a small piece of the Space Shuttle Columbia fell on Feb. 1 after the orbiter disintegrated upon re-entry at the end of a 16-day scientific mission. (BP photo by Richard D. McCormack)

returned for family reunions. Video tapes of both men recorded before their Columbia

band to Evelyn and to be a good father to my children."

Anderson's tape included a mention that both he and Husband had faced a lot of challenges during their training.

"Rick and I both feel we were put on this mission for a reason and we have tried to meet all those challenges with prayer," Anderson said in his video.

"Through these days of tragedy there comes, somehow, the light of triumph," Riggle told the congregation, according to the Houston Chronicle. "I

Members of the Grace Community choir had an especially difficult time dealing with the absence of their famous member, posting a picture of Husband in his uniform in the choir room and sharing brief remembrances before turning to the task of comforting the congregation.

Husband had sung a solo on the church's recording, Rise Up and Praise Him, and had participated in numerous Christmas and Easter productions.

While much of the spotlight fell on Sunday services held the day after the tragedy shocked the nation, the newspaper reported that Grace Community opened its doors all day Feb. 1 to members of the community who wanted to share their grief.

Anderson's mother, Barbara, interviewed on CBS' "Early Show" Feb. 3, recounted, "He told me some years ago the word 'can't' should be taken out of the dictionary because there wasn't nothing that can't be done."

Looking back

10 years ago

The Finance Committee of the Mississippi Senate adjourns without taking any action on a state-operated lottery bill, and thus allowed the bill to die.

20 years ago

Trustees of Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, Ca., meet in San Francisco to elect a president to succeed Bill Pinson. The search committee is to submit the name of Frank Pollard, former pastor of First Church, Jackson.

50 years ago

Trustees at Mississippi College in Clinton hear the story of the much-needed enlargement campaign from president D. M. Nelson. According to Nelson, the enrollment of 1138 is the largest in the school's history, with classroom and dormitory space overflowing.



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BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
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Announcing up

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - More than 8.5 million pieces of promotional literature were received by churches in January and February as part of a campaign in many Southern Baptist churches to raise money for North American missions. Through the March 7 Week of Prayer for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Southern Baptists will undergird domestic missions efforts through prayer and financial support. With a goal of \$53 million, the offering theme for 2003 is Partners in Purpose, reflecting the cooperation of churches, associations, state conventions, and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in supporting 5,204 missionaries in the United States, Canada and U.S. territories. The promotional effort began in late December and early January with the mailing of a promotional packet to 42,000 Southern Baptist Convention churches. Offering envelopes, promotional posters, and prayer guides will be mailed by state Women's Missionary Union (WMU) offices in February. The promotional packet contains a videotape featuring profiles of the Week of Prayer missionaries, a CD-ROM, promotional guide and a sample "missionary trading card" useful for helping both children and adults remember to pray for missionaries. The www.anniemission.org website also has become one of the primary resources for information about NAMB and the offering campaign. (NAMB) visitors using the site last year. Many of the items in the promotional packet also are available on the website. For a number of unique resources and other information, visit the website. For more information about the offering, visit the website. For more information about the offering, visit the website.

Wounded pharmacist continues recovery

JIBLA, Yemen (BP — Don Caswell saw the armed man walking toward him and knew — just knew — the gunman was coming to kill him. "I was looking at him and I saw him look at me, and that instant I realized he was coming right toward the pharmacy," Caswell said in his soft Texas accent.

Caswell, a pharmacist, was shot twice during the Dec. 30 attack at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen, but after emergency surgery and treatment he is recovering. When he was able to talk about the shootings a week later, he attributed his survival to a miracle of God.

Three other Southern Baptist workers, physician Martha Myers, hospital administrator William Koehn, and purchasing manager Kathleen Gariety, were shot dead by the gunman.

Don and Teri Caswell had worked at the hospital for about 18 months of a two-year term with the International Mission Board's International Service Corps. Their term was to end in June.

Don grew up in Levelland, Texas, near Lubbock, but he and Teri call Eustace, Texas, home. They are members of First Church there.

In the early morning hours of December 30, Caswell and a pharmacist from Russia handled a flurry of prescription refills.

Around 8 a.m., they heard gunshots. "It is not unusual in Yemen for people to shoot guns off, but normally not that early in the morning and it sounded like it was real close," Caswell recalled.

He walked out the door of the one-room pharmacy and looked down the corridor. He saw a man come out of Bill Koehn's office. "I noticed he wasn't running real fast but he was moving quickly and I noticed a gun in his hand. It was a pistol of some kind. I couldn't tell for sure what kind it was," Caswell said.

As he made eye contact with the gunman, Caswell moved back into the pharmacy room, thinking he would move behind a work counter — but the gunman entered immediately behind Caswell and stood no more than five feet away.

"At that time I knew he was going to shoot me," Caswell recounted. "An incredible thing about that was that I wasn't filled with a lot of fear," he said. "I had a certain peace about all this. Then a shot came, and I think probably in the back of my mind was, 'Well, where is he going to shoot and is it going to hurt very much?'"

"He got me right here in the side. It wasn't just an unbearable pain but it did hurt pretty bad. I remember that shot and I thought I heard two more quick shots but I didn't feel anything else."

Caswell was hit twice, once in each side, though the second shot apparently entered from the back as he spun around and fell from the impact of the first shot. In the warped perception of time in crisis events, Caswell clearly recalls talking to God in that quick-but-long few seconds between the time he was shot and when help arrived in the form of doctors and nurses.

"This whole time I was just talking to God and it did hurt a little but... I didn't feel like I'm dying, whatever that feels

like, you know," he said, "but still at this time I never was unconscious. I just had this peaceful feeling. Seems to me maybe I was talking to God out loud. Maybe it was just in my mind, but I was asking the Lord if this was the time he was going to take me, if I was going to die there. I remember telling him that, 'Lord, if you want to take me it's fine, but I would really like to stay here and not leave Teri and the boys alone here like this.'"

Doctors rushed Caswell to an operating room, where most supplies had been packed away for the hospital's potential closure. Missionary physician Judy Williams had earlier insisted on leaving out enough instruments and other items for emergency surgery.

Exploratory surgery ascertained that the bullets had missed vital organs and that there was no internal bleeding. As soon as he recovered sufficiently, the Caswells went to another country to recuperate.

As they walked around their new town with their boys, visited a park, and bought ice cream cones, Don and Teri kept looking at each other, gratitude fairly shining in their faces for this extended time they now have together. After so much uncertainty, Teri is finally able to kid Don about being shot in his "love handles." She said with a grin: "We're just thankful he's a little overweight."

With their current Yemen assignment almost complete anyway, the Caswells did not yet know for sure what they would do next. They planned to wait to hear what God has for them. Would they return to Yemen? "Yes, if that's where God calls us," Caswell said.

What would they say to Southern Baptists who have supported them? "Keep praying!" Teri said. "We're OK! And we're going to do what the Lord wants us to do."



RECOVERING — After Don Caswell (center) survived the Dec. 30 attack on Jibla Baptist Hospital, he and his wife, Teri (right) and their sons Ben (left), age 11, and Caleb, age 5, are waiting to hear from God about what he wants them to do next — even if it means going back to Yemen. Three Southern Baptist workers were killed in the attack. (BP photo by Mike Creswell; (c) International Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia)

Mississippi legislators to debate bills of interest

By Jimmy Porter,
CAC Executive Director

The 2003 session of the Mississippi Legislature began on January 7, with 1,471 bills introduced in the House of Representatives and 871 bills in the Senate. Following are a few of the bills that the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) is monitoring.

The list is in no way inclusive of all the issues that concern Mississippi Baptists. House bills are identified as HB, while Senate Bills are identified as SB. The description of each bill is followed by a CAC recommendation on supporting or opposing the bill.

Many of these bills will die in committee, but not all of them. Mississippi Baptists desiring to track a particular bill or bills can do so via Internet (www.ls.state.ms.us). The CAC encourages Mississippi Baptists to contact their state representative and senator about any legislation of concern. Representatives and senators may be contacted weekdays during the 2003 session at (601) 359-3770, or by utilizing the web site listed above.

Many times a bill may appear to be an excellent piece of legislation but after review, it may con-

tain some elements that make it unacceptable to Mississippi Baptists. If there are other bills for which information is desired, e-mail CAC at (601) 292-3329, or toll-free outside Jackson at (800) 748-1651, ext. 329.

Remember to pray for Mississippi's senators and representatives as they seek to make decisions that affect all our lives.

ABORTION

- HB 211 — Restricts the time period during which an abortion will be legal. Support.
- HB 964 — If abortion fails, child may not be intentionally allowed to die. Support.
- HB 1005 — Demands that a physician performing an abortion in a clinic be board-certified in obstetrics/gynecology. Support.

ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

- SB 2082 — Makes it a felony to knowingly expose another to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that develops into AIDS. Support.

ALCOHOL/DRUGS

- HB 21 — Prevents certain "drive-through" sales of alcoholic beverages. Support.
- HB 104 — Defines as manslaughter the death of unborn fetus as a result of drunk driving. Support.
- HB 712/SB 2176 — Allows

multiple counts for vehicular homicide, covering drunk driver collisions where more than one person is killed. Support.

- HB 831/SB 2442 — Prohibits open container of alcoholic beverages in a vehicle. Support.

- HB 954 — Requires separate election to allow sale of alcohol when a "wet" city annexes a portion of a "dry" county. Support.

- HB 1257 — Creates drug court treatment programs statewide. Support.

- SB 2009 — Authorizes sale of alcoholic beverages at qualified resort areas in counties where such sales are prohibited. Oppose.

FAMILY

- HB 122 — Provides for covenant marriage. Support.
- HB 642 — Deletes statute of limitations for sexual abuse of children. Support.
- HB 977/HB 979 — Makes it a misdemeanor to violate a protection order. Support.
- HB 981 — Prohibits placing a child in the legal custody of a parent/guardian who has a history of family violence. Support.

GAMBLING

- HB 1100 — Prohibits publicly-funded educational institutions from teaching persons to gamble. Support.

- HB 824 — Allows publicly-funded universities and community colleges to teach gambling-related courses. Oppose.

- HB 24 — Defines unlawful gambling devices. Support.
- HB 1417 — Provides for a state lottery. Oppose.
- HB 1213 — Legalizes video poker. Oppose.

RELIGION

- SB 2018 — Exempt churches from sales tax on certain sales. Support.
- SB 2083 — Protects free exercise of religion from state interference. Support.

TOBACCO

- HB 552 — Creates the Mississippi Smoke Free Family Restaurant Act. Support.
- HB 607 — Increase excise tax on tobacco products. Support.

MISCELLANEOUS

- HB 64 — Requires a DNA sample to be taken from convicted felons upon their entry into the state prison system, in order to record specific identification characteristics. Support.
- HB 126/HB202 — Requires voter identification before voting. Support.
- HB 1397 — Directs State Board of Education to insert into certain public school textbooks language that explains evolution is a theory. Support.

Super Bowl weekend garners professions

SAN DIEGO (BP) — More than 40 people accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior during a Super Bowl block party Jan. 25 at First Church in Imperial Beach, Calif. The block party was one of three sponsored by the San Diego Baptist Association and hosted by three area churches. The churches served free burgers, hot dogs and nachos and offered extreme games for the kids and musical performances — all designed to let community residents know their local Baptist church cares about them.

What happened at Imperial Beach is nothing short of a miracle, said Doug Johnson, pastor of the 75-member church. The small Baptist congregation hosted a block party that attracted nearly 700 people at Veteran's Park. More than 40 residents gave their lives to the Lord inside the park.

"I am so proud of our people," Johnson said. "They are willing to take on any challenge. I believe what happened inside this park today has raised our people's faith to a new level."

The day of the street party was nearly picture-perfect. With temperatures in the upper 70s, church members transformed the quiet park into a festive, colorful family friend refuge. Church members arrived at 5:30 a.m. and began preparing for the party. "Before it started, we had one young couple saved during set-up," Johnson said.

Live bands performed in the park's gazebo while clowns painted faces and created balloon animals for children. Older kids played football and maneuvered their way through extreme sports mazes while

church members prepared food and beverages for the growing crowds. Every half-hour, the Gospel message was presented and an opportunity to respond was offered.

The event, Johnson said, was an example of Southern Baptists cooperating. The local association provided financial support for the event, while Terrell Eldreth, pastor of Carlton Hills Church in Santee, drove down to the city and offered to share evangelistic sermons. Meanwhile, a group of Southern Baptist teenagers from Apple Valley, Calif., drove more than two hours to minister through the performing arts at the party. Two Southern Baptist evangelists from Georgia and two North American Mission Board missionaries arrived from West Virginia to offer their assistance.

Chris Meekins, a Gardner-Webb University student, read about the block party on the North American Mission Board's (NAMB's) volunteer website. Wanting to help out, Meekins paid his way to California and had been camped out on the couch of a Mission Service Corps volunteer in San Diego since Jan. 22.

"I'm just glad to be out here sharing the Gospel with people," Meekins said. "We've been doing a lot of witnessing out here."

Johnson, a graduate of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, said most of the salvation reports came from one-on-one encounters.

"We've been very non-confrontational," Johnson said. "Our people have a heart for reaching their community."

Across town at the Encanto Southern Baptist Church, about 100 community residents turned out for the block party, reported Don Conley, pastor of the church and a NAMB church starter strategist.

"We are being very intentional with this event," Conley said. "This is our community and we are going to reach out to everyone."



THE CHURCH HEARSE

If you have ever visited E-Bay on the worldwide web, you know that almost anything and everything is for sale! It fluctuates from day to day, probably from hour to hour, so I really don't know how many millions of items are listed on the cyber-store web site. However, I do know it is a bunch — everything from cufflinks to kitchen sinks and from old books to fishing hooks. It is truly amazing and eye-popping to "walk" around in this computer store and see all the things that are for sale.

The same is true just out in life itself. What people put out there for sale is thought provoking. For instance, I recently saw a car for sale. Now, please understand that it was not just a car — it was a BIG car. And, it was not just a big car for a family; it was a white hearse — a funeral car! On the back window of this hearse was a great big sign that said, "For Sale." When I first saw the sign, I asked myself, "Why?" It was a fairly new looking vehicle and I wondered if it had been in a wreck, or if it had been broken, or if business (the dying business) was down. I just don't believe I have ever seen a hearse for sale.

Now that I think about it, I did actually know some folks that bought an old, antique, worn-out hearse. They used it for putting around and had a lot of fun with it. This hearse that was for sale was not that way. It was not old or dilapidated and it looked like it was in good shape. I continued to



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

wonder why they would actually be trying to sell it out on the street. Then I began to ask, not "why?" but "who?" I wondered, "Who in the world would want one of those things?" Most people don't want to be reminded of what a hearse represents and would prefer to just push aside any symbols or resemblances of anything that would remind them of life's finality.

As I thought about it, it dawned on me that this would be a great vehicle for a church to own. Oh, I'm not talking about "dead" churches needing it. Churches that are spiritually dead don't need much of anything. In fact, about the only thing they could possibly use is life." No, I'm talking about a church that is alive and well, active and reaching people for Jesus. That kind of church may need a hearse. Why? Well, for one thing, the purpose of the hearse is to help live folks help dead folks. That's the reason those cars are built the way they are. There's not too much room in the front for anybody and there is a lot of room in the back for the people who will be riding there and a big door to help them get in.

As with our churches, we

need to provide a lot of room for the people that are in the greatest need — those who are dead in trespasses and in sin. Sometimes, we provide 90-95%, possibly 100%, of all the space, all the programs, all the provisions, and all the future for the live folks and we forget that Jesus came for the lost folks. He established His church for people without Him and He wanted us to focus on keeping a wide-open door to help them find new life.

That brought me to a second thought I had of why a church may need a hearse and that is they are made to help dead people get where they need to be. Now, in the case of physical death and transportation, people need to be taken to the cemetery or a mausoleum. If you think about it, these unusual truck/car combinations are designed for only one thing — getting deceased people where they are supposed to be. Now, in this case, we are the ones who need to transport or help get the "spiritually dead" to where they need to be. We need to get them help and hope found only in Jesus Christ.

The instructions that Jesus gave to His church — the "Great Commission" — specif-

ically says that we are to make disciples. We are to reach out to people who are in sin's death grip and lead them to the Savior's grip of love and life. Then, they in turn can go out and bring even others. This is what the church was designed for — to help get people without life where they need to be.

One other thought that occurred to me was that these special pieces of transportation serve to help remove some of the pain of the horrors of death. Even the most ancient of these kinds of coaches, ones that were pulled by horses, were decorated-up, spruced-up, spiced-up, and fancied-up, so that people could better cope with the tragedy that has struck. It wouldn't hurt for a church to have that kind of vehicle at its disposal — for every one of us and everyone we see has been touched by the plague of sin. We are all sinners. We have been born into the family of sinners and we live as sinners, both by nature and by choice. God comes to us and provides curtains of grace, flowers of love, means of forgiveness, and takes the worst of our state and makes it better. In fact, He makes it glorious!

If all of our churches had a hearse, that would let everyone around, in every home, in every business, know that God has provided a way for us to deal with the worst that comes our way. It could not be stated more clearly than when God said to Paul, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

CLOWNING AROUND — Carrol Halowell (right), known as Jingle Bell the clown, spreads a little paint — and love — during a Super Bowl weekend block party at Encanto Church in San Diego. (BP photo by Michael Winn)

Top 10 for baptisms in 2002

1. Crossgates Church, Brandon: 209
2. Trinity Church, Southaven: 161
3. Colonial Hills Church, Southaven: 154
4. Temple Church, Hattiesburg: 141
5. Pinelake Church, Brandon: 140
6. Emmanuel Church, Grenada: 114
7. Harrisburg Church, Tupelo: 106
8. Northcrest Church, Meridian: 101
9. Wade Church, Pascagoula: 94
10. Bomar Church, Vicksburg: 87

First Church, Florence: 87

Source: MBCB Evangelism Dept.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Calvary Church, Pascagoula, will hold an appreciation day for **Claudia Hawkins** on Feb. 16. Hawkins has served as pianist for 20 years.

Branch Church, Morton, held a Baby Dedication Nov. 24. Pictured (from left) are Mark and



Youth of Bartahatchie Church, Caledonia

ministry, the Triple C Team. The **WMU of Harmontown Church, Harmontown,** held a Bake Sale for the community in

the Fire Station on Jan. 26. The funds received went towards the Lottie Moon offering and they exceeded their goal.

WMU of Harmontown Church, Harmontown



WMU of Harmontown Church, Harmontown

The youth and their leaders of **Bartahatchie Church, Caledonia,** filled and gave 21 shoe boxes to Operation Christmas Child. They also perform a puppet and black light



Branch Church, Morton Baby Dedication

Claudia Hawkins

the Fire Station on Jan. 26. The funds received went towards the Lottie Moon offering and they exceeded their goal.

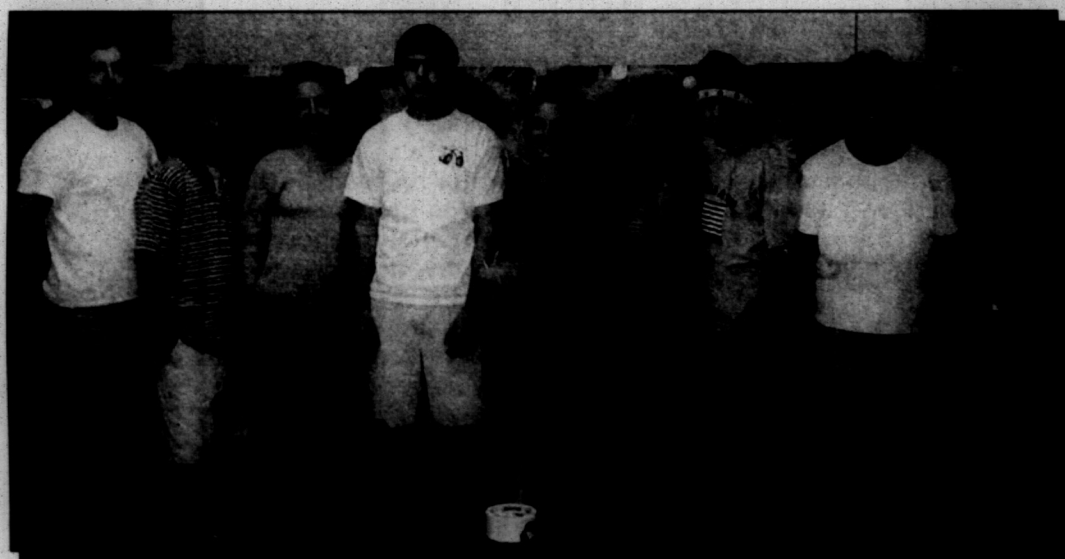
HOMECOMING & REVIVAL DATES

Friendship, Aberdeen: Feb. 16-19; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Tommy Cunningham, First Church, McGehee, Ark., preaching; Wayne Baggett, Southside Church, Decatur, Ala., music.

South McComb, McComb: March 28-30; 100th anniversary; Fri., youth reunion; Sat., church birthday party; Sunday, worship celebration; the Planning Committee requests any memorabilia as well as current addresses be sent to the church; for more information, call (601) 684-3370; Ted Bowlin, pastor.

Corinth, Purvis: March 9-13; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Thu., 7 p.m.; Scotty McDowell, chalk talk artist and evangelist; for more information, call (601) 794-6918; David Strebeck, pastor.

Fernwood, Gulfport: March 20-23; Kevin Meador, Decatur, speaking; Thu.-Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.; for more information, call (228) 896-4556 or e-mail fernwoodbc@aol.com.



Triple C Team of Bartahatchie Church, Caledonia

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What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

February 6, 2003

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

25th Anniversary Family Week at Gulfshore Baptist Assembly

Events:

- Ice cream/watermelon fellowships
- Night swimming
- Bar-b-que cookout
- Wednesday afternoon festival with space walks, super slide, clowns and much more fun
- Thursday FREE DAY

Tues., July 1, thru Sat., July 5

Registration - 2 p.m.
Tuesday

Adjourn - 9 a.m.
Saturday

Pastor for the week:
Eric Thomas

First Baptist Church, Vicksburg

Special Guests:

- Robert Stevens & Lion's Roar Band (10 members), Biloxi
- Gospel Singing
- Clowns\Patriotic Program by Jan Halford, Jackson, and Gwen Williams, "Miss Chocolate" New Orleans

Conferences:

PRESCHOOLER/CHILDREN

- Team Kids

TEENAGERS

- Mini-Centrifuge
Gary Maze, Madison
Pastor, State Youth for Christ Director

ADULT CONFERENCES

- Single Parenting
James Haynes, Biloxi
- Couples
Phil and Cindy Waugh, Franklin, Tenn.
Phil is the author of "How to Minister to Families in Your Church," and he is also the director of the Covenant Marriage Movement.
- Heaven's View
Ed Deuschle, MBCB
Director of Church Planting

Family Week or Senior Adult Retreat Registration

You may send your reservations after February 1, 2003

Name of Adult(s) _____

(For Sr. Adult Retreat ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Couple)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

(For Family Conference: Children's names/birthdays _____)

Church _____ Association _____

Registering for: ☐ Family Week or ☐ Senior Adult Retreat ☐ I ☐ II ☐ III ☐ IV

Amount Enclosed: _____

Mail to: Gulfshore Baptist Assembly, 100 First Street, Pass Christian, MS 39571

(Visa/MasterCard are accepted.) For more information call 228-452-7261.

Make checks payable to Gulfshore Baptist Assembly.

(Note: No skateboards, roller-blades or scooters)

Deposit: \$40 per person or \$80 per family

FAMILY WEEK COST PER PERSON - ROOM/MEAL/RESERVATIONS

"A" Unit

Adults \$179.50 ea.
Youth (12yrs-18yrs) \$177.00 ea.
Child (2-11 yrs) \$90.00 ea.
Under 2 yrs old No Charge

"C" Unit

Adults (18 yrs/up) \$159.50 ea.
Youth (12yrs-12th Grade) \$97.00 ea.
Child (2-11 yrs old) \$60.00 ea.
Under 2 yrs old No Charge

Note: If you will be attending the Creative Memories workshop be sure to bring your supplies with you. A craft workshop will also be offered.

Applications are currently being taken for summer staff at Camp Garaywa.

Interviews are being held at Camp Garaywa on February 12-15 and March 14-16.

For more information:

- (1) talk to your BSU director,
- (2) contact Robin Keels at 1-800-748-1651, ext. 322, or e-mail at rkeels@mbcb.org and
- (3) complete the online application (www.mbc.org.WMU Department).

"JUST A WANNA BE"

Register now for...

MissionsNOW Weekend!
March 28-30, 2003

Talk to your youth leaders...they have the details!

For more info, e-mail rkeels@mbcb.org or tanderson@mbcb.org or phone Robin or Tammy at 1-800-748-1651, ext. 322 or 292-3322 (Jackson)

Church Facilities & Furnishings Workshop

March 18, 2003

8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Broadmoor Baptist Church
1531 Highland Colony Parkway
Madison, Mississippi

Church Facilities & Furnishings Workshop

March 18, 2003

Registration Form

Cost: \$15 per person (includes lunch)

Name: _____ Church Name: _____

Church Address: _____

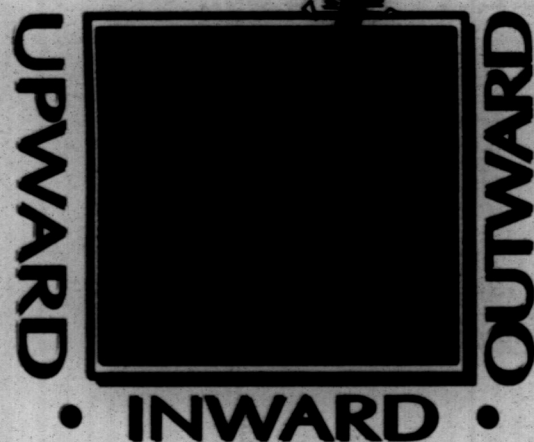
City: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

____ Church ____ Vendor (Vendors: please indicate which of the following you will need) ____ Table ____ Electrical Power Supply

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Number Attending: _____

A Ministry of Your Cooperative Program

The conference is for pastors, staff members, building committees, long-range planning committees, business administrators and maintenance/property personnel. For more information, please call the Pastor/Leadership Development Department at 1-800-748-1651 or 601-968-3800 in Jackson.



The Mississippi Baptist Growth Spiral Conference

First Baptist Church
Winona

February 25, 2003

9 a.m. - noon

Leader: Ken Marler

The Sunday School Organized and On Mission!

The Sunday School Growth Plan is a tool to enable a church to experience growth through a dynamic, balanced Sunday School ministry.

It will also help any church diagnose their own church health. It can help plan for future growth. And it will show how the Sunday School is the foundational strategy for the local church for leading people to the Lord Jesus Christ and for building on-mission Christians.

Cost: \$5 per person which includes lunch and all conference materials

Need more information?

Call the Sunday School Department at 1-800-748-1651 or 601-968-3800 in Jackson

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- Youth Ministry
- Media
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conferences

FEBRUARY 21-22, 2003

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Cost: \$85

For more information about the camp program contact Don Hicks at 601-292-3287 in Jackson or 1-800-748-1651 or by e-mail at dhicks@mbcb.org. For information about reservations or the retreat center contact Jim Ray at 662-289-9730 or by e-mail at jray@mbcb.org.

Discipleship Resource Showcase



Department 1-800-748-1651

One Voice in Worship February 16

*Wynndale BC
Terry, 6 p.m.*



For more information contact the MBOB Church Music Department at 1-800-748-1651 or 601-292-3267

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Pray this day for...

February 7 - February 20, 2003

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"Love is a fruit in season at all times, and within the reach of every hand." Mother Teresa

For: (1) Race Reconciliation (CAC Emphasis); (2) Alice White is director of the Stewart Center in Atlanta, Ga. Pray for the Christian Women's Job Corps ministry, for the ministry to teenage boys, and that God will bring completion to their vision for a new facility.

Pray that God will call out a career, associate or apprentice couple to work in evangelism/church planting among the well-to-do living in the high rise apartments of Montevideo, UY. Secularism has become their god in many cases.

For: (1) Bivo Pastor/Smaller Membership S.S. Director Meeting, Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain, 6:30-9 p.m. (P/LD & SS); (2) Focus on WMU, 10th/16th (WMU); (3) The Columbia Deaf Team asks: "Pray for us as we make decisions as to the best use of the 'Jesus' film (in Colombian Sign Language).

Phil Nelson is a college evangelism strategist for the Illinois Baptist Convention. Phil helps churches develop creative ministry tools to reach college students. Pray for the churches to develop their ministries and that college students will come to know Christ.

For: (1) Bivo Pastor/Smaller Membership S.S. Director Meeting, Kilmichael BC, Kilmichael, 6 a.m.-9 p.m. (P/LD & SS); (2) VBS JumpStart, Alta Woods BC, Jackson, 9 a.m.-noon (SS); (3) Pray that by hearing Bible stories in chronological order, Guarayos of Bolivia will understand God's redemptive plan for all.

Please pray for M. and S., who have been meeting weekly for Bible study with some members of the Serb Team. Pray that these two leaders would catch the vision of reproducing small groups and even invite their nonbelieving friends to their homes to open the Word together.

In India newspaper advertisements are being published that offer a free copy of the New Testament, as well as portraying Jesus as the answer to life's critical questions. Pray that many will take a step of faith and ask for a New Testament, and that they will be read by multiple persons.

Team Netherlands asks you to petition for the protection of several refugees. Each of their stories is different, yet they share a similar theme. They have all fallen in love with Jesus and are taking courageous, life-threatening steps of obedience in following Him. Ask the Father to encourage them in their faith and meet all of their needs.

Missionary Bob Hale in South Korea has the opportunity to lead a group of university professors in study. Pray for Bob to have wisdom in preparing materials for the class among these professors. Pray that as they study together, the professors will find Christ as their Savior.

Praise God for the work of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Unit. In 2002 they assisted in 12 disasters from New York to Texas. The disaster relief team has about 150 volunteers. Additionally, several Baptist associations have disaster teams of their own. Pray that this ministry will be a strong witness to all who are helped.

For: (1) WMU Executive Board Meeting, Central Hills, Kosciusko, 10 a.m., 7th-noon, 8th (WMU); (2) Churchmen Retreat, noon-4th-noon, 8th (CM); (3) Pray for missionaries in Warsaw, Poland, that God would give them ways to overcome the barriers of language and culture, in order to share the good news of Jesus with the people of Warsaw.

For: (1) Missions Mobilization Team Leader Training (MMOB); (2) Pray for strength and wisdom for the general secretary and the president of the Ghana Baptist Convention as they lead Ghana Baptists to reach their country for Christ.

For: (1) Christian Education Clinic, Highland BC, Meridian, 8 am-1pm (D&FM); (2) Pray for the many former Muslims who have found eternal life in Jesus Christ to remain faithful until death in the face of persecution. Ask the Lord to encourage and sustain them through His Word, His Spirit and His people.

The "Resettlement People" need your prayers! 1.3 million people in Chongqing, China, will be forced to move from their homes, due to the massive Three Gorge Dam Project. Of these 1.3 million, 99 percent are lost. Pray that God would send His ambassadors to reach out to these desperate people.

For some time I have had a desire to organize a State Handbell Choir. The choir's members would be selected by audition from the Baptist churches of Mississippi. Lay persons and ministers are welcome to audition.

This select group of ringers will establish rehearsal schedules and make plans to share their music throughout the state as opportunities arise.

If you are interested in ringing with this select choir of 13 or 14 ringers you may call the Church Music Department, MBCB (601-292-3273 or 1-800-748-1651, ext. 273) giving your name and how you can be contacted. You may also drop a note to Jerry Talley, Church Music Department, Handbell Contract Consultant, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205.

Auditions will be scheduled in the spring of 2003. Those who have given us their name will be contacted in March to notify them of audition dates and places.



Jerry Talley
Handbell Contract Consultant
Church Music Department
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

3-89 Miss Alicia L. Racey
Parents: Michael & Annette

4-83 Miss Jennifer L. Johnston
Parents: Vincent & Sharon

9-91 Mr. John M. Curtis
Parents: Clifton & Cathy

10-02 Travis L. Story
Parents: Clifton & Melanie

15-81 Mr. Joel K. Glaze
Parents: David & Gloria

15-81 Mr. Seth R. Glaze
Parents: David & Gloria

21-82 Mr. Joel B. Collins
Parents: Charles & Suzanne

23-98 Miss Lilly A. Foster
Parents: Michael & Miranda

24-90 Miss Kimberly E. Carlton
Parents: David & Pamela

28-87 Miss Rebekah L. Ray
Parents: Michael & Linda Ray

29-93 Mr. Christopher Carlton
Parents: David & Pamela



Take a moment to send
a card to encourage
the children of
our missionaries!

Please take a moment to drop a birthday
greeting and word of encouragement to our
Missionary Kids! For security, cards will be for-
warded. Please send all to:

Child's name and parent's name
International Mission Board
P.O. Box 6767
Richmond, VA 23230-8767

HOUSE TOPS

JUST FOR THE RECORD

The GAs of Wesson Church, Wesson, began a mission last year selling American T-shirts to remember the heroes of Sept. 11. The proceeds are being presented to the Wesson Volunteer Fire Department. GA leaders are Nancy Bell, Anita Cliburn, Jennye Greer, and Dana Rials.

The youth of Holly Church, Corinth, attended the No Fear youth conference in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., in December.

The WOM of Flag Lake Church, Sarah, Hollywood Church, Sledge, and Sledge Church, Sledge, held a week of prayer meetings Dec. 1-8. Pictured (from left) are Eva Fabiszack and Elizabeth Coston.

The Union County Resource Association presents Summer Blast, a Christian festival, July 19 from 5-10 p.m. at the Union County Fairgrounds, New Albany. Audio Adrenaline

along with many other bands and drama teams will be performing. Admission is \$3 and one canned item. Food will be available. For more information, call (662) 534-5829.

First Church, Jackson, will sponsor Grief Gathering, A Safe Place to Explore Your Personal Grief, on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27, March 6, and 13 in the Christian Life Center Auditorium. For more informa-

tion, contact (601) 949-1907.

The Teaching Center is a Bible teaching outreach of The Fathers Field Ministries. Classes begin Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m. and are open every Mon. and Thurs. from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Admission is free. Mark Case and Fred Wolfe will be teaching God's Word in Spirit and Truth. For more information, call (601) 956-2552.

Greater Vision will be in concert at West McComb Church, McComb, on Feb. 6 at 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information, call (601) 684-5442.

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WEST SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH is taking bids on eighteen padded oak pews, along with two pulpit chairs and one communion table. Call (601) 989-2359 for information.

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WANTED: MINISTER OF WORSHIP, Silverdale Baptist Church, (avg. worship attendance 1,200) is seeking full-time minister of worship to lead our contemporary worship services, direct large choir, praise team and orchestra. Please send resume to 7236 Bonny Oaks Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37421.

RECEIVING RESUMES THROUGH February 28th for "conservative" senior pastor to Shepard Southern Baptist Church of 200 plus members in Northwest Arkansas. Send to 2411 S.W. 10th Street, Bentonville, Arkansas 72712.

THE BETHEL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is now receiving resumes from all who are interested in the position of Director of Missions. Please send resumes to: Linden Baptist Church, Attention: Rev. Billy Harris, P.O. Box 481088, Linden, AL 36748. Deadline: All resumes must be received by March 15, 2003.

LINDEN VALLEY BAPTIST Conference Center, a Tennessee Baptist Convention facility, is searching for a ministry minded individual to fill year-round foodservice supervisor's position offering generous benefits package. Experience in menu planning, staff supervision, meal preparation and purchasing required. If interested, contact (877) 354-6336 or thughes@tnbaptist.org.

A HUMOROUS AND NOSTALGIC look back at a Preacher-Teacher and would-be comedian growing up in rural Mississippi. "My Brother Was An Only Child", written by Arlis Nichols. It's 214 pages of pure pleasure. Send \$15 to Arlis Nichols, 1142 C R 375, Enterprise, MS 39330. For Banquet Information call (601) 659-9991 or e-mail Arlisweb@aol.com.

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Youth of Holly Church, Corinth



GAs of Wesson Church, Wesson



Eva Fabiszack and Elizabeth Coston

BAPTIST COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

LaDonna Ferguson, Laurel, was crowned Miss Carey 2003 Friday night at William Carey College. Ferguson was crowned by Miss Carey 2002, Michelle Sherrell, Laurel. Jennifer Rawls, Poplarville, was first alternate and Audrea McMillen, Amory, was second



Blue Mountain College Creative Writing Essay Winners

alternate. The contestants chose Andrea Godshaw, Richton, as Miss Congeniality. Ferguson has begun preparations for the Miss Mississippi Pageant which will take place on June 28 in Vicksburg.

Mississippi students from 140 public and private schools



Blue Mountain College Informal Essay Winners

will gather at Mississippi College, Clinton, for the 29th annual Mississippi Math and Science Tournament on Feb. 6 and 7. The top awards given to winning students this year have been named the Dr. Craig Whitlock Memorial Awards. Winning students will also be

Blue Mountain College recently announced the winners of the 2002-2003 Creative Writing Contest. Students submitted writings in categories of poetry, short story, formal essay, and informal essay. Pictured

are the winners.

Cheryl Mortin;
Cover Design
Winner



Blue Mountain College Creative Writing Poetry Winners

awarded Mississippi College academic scholarships.

a program of music from the works of Mozart, Brahms, and Debussy. Admission is free.

James Sclater and Angela Willoughby, the performing duo of clarinet and piano known as Lyricas, are in concert at Mississippi College, Clinton, on Feb. 18 in Aven Hall at 7:30 p.m. The duo will perform

STAFF CHANGES

McAdams Church, Sallis, called Dan West as pastor on Nov. 3. West and his wife Rachel live in Kosciusko.

Magnolia Church, Laurel, called Jay Cook as pastor on Nov. 3. Cook, a native of Batesville, previously served as pastor of Toomsba Church, Toomsba. Cook attended Mississippi College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



Blue Mountain College Creative Writing Short Story Winners

FLOWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a P/T Youth Minister. Please send resume to 1649 Old Fannin Road, Flowood, MS 39232, Attention: Personnel Department.

DRUMMER NEEDED FOR JACKSON metro area SBC church. Call 601-946-9406 for details.

SLAYDEN BAPTIST CHURCH, Slayden, Miss. (Marshall Association) is seeking an interim Music/Worship Leader. Please contact the church office at (662) 252-4559.

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Ministry Team, Parkway Baptist Church, 50 North Parkway, Hernando, MS 38632. For more information call (662) 429-6045.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

The Bible: Its Value

Psalm 119:9-16; Jeremiah 36:2-3, 21-24, 27-28

By Shirley Stough

Do you consider your Bible one of your treasures? If so, how do you show that it is a treasure? Treasures can be locked away for safe keeping, displayed for all to see, or carefully used. The Bible is a treasure that is intended for our daily use. It is a guide to teach us the way to salvation and the way to live Godly lives.

The theme of Psalm 119 is God's Word - a treasury of God's thoughts from God's heart. God's Word should be treasured because it contains God's standards of a Christian lifestyle. By measuring ourselves against these standards, we are convicted of our sins. To help us resist temptation when we do not have access to a written copy of God's Word, we need a memory storehouse of precepts from God's

Word. We need God's strength and God's Word to remind us not to resort to sin's temptation. The Bible is our defense against sin. Read daily, the Bible gives us strength, encouragement, and guidance to face each day's circumstances. It contains all we need to know to live a righteous life.

Many people do not have access to the Word. Some, in fact, could be murdered for possessing it. How fortunate we are to own a copy of the Word and to be able to read it freely! Like the psalmist we should rejoice that we have the opportunity to tell others about God's helpful commandments, that we have His statutes to follow, and that we can enjoy regular reading of His Word. The joy we have in God's Word can



Stough

be seen in how we receive and respond to it. How do we treasure it? Do we eagerly read it daily or do we merely take it back and forth to church on Sunday?

Another value of the Scripture is that it is written for a purpose. Jeremiah 36 contains an example of God's purpose in giving Scripture. The people of Judah were extremely backslidden. God wanted them to repent. He told Jeremiah to write in a scroll all of the messages that God had given him over his 20-year ministry. These messages were filled with warnings for Judah to repent. Jeremiah dictated the message to Baruch. God wanted the message read to the people so that they would know the judgment God planned to inflict if they did not repent. An important purpose of the Bible is to convict people of sin and to encourage them to repent in order to receive forgiveness.

Jeremiah obeyed God's demands. According to King Jehoiakim's orders, Jeremiah was banned from the temple. Therefore, Jeremiah sent Baruch to read God's warnings to the people. As Baruch read, a king's attendant decided that the king's council should hear it. When the council heard it, they realized they had to tell the king about God's warning. Expecting a violent reaction, the council urged Jeremiah and Baruch to hide. Then the council took the scroll to King Jehoiakim. As Jehudi read, the king became so angry that he burned the entire manuscript. His effort to destroy God's Word was in vain. God commanded Jeremiah to rewrite everything he had written before with additions. Jeremiah obeyed. This incident proves that God's Word is indestructible. People can try to destroy it, but God can inspire it to be rewritten as many times as necessary.

Others through the years have tried to destroy God's Word. For centuries, the Bible was written only in Latin and allowed only in

the hands of educated clergy and highly learned citizens. John Wycliffe, Erasmus and William Tyndale had dreams of putting the Bible in the hands of ordinary people. Despite persecution, these men were successful in their goal. People joyfully received the Word even though it had to be discreetly delivered and in some situations they paid high prices for the Bibles.

Efforts of sacrifice to give us the Word of God remind us that we should appreciate the privilege of having it. Surely no Christian would reject the Word of God as King Jehoiakim did. However, we show disdain for God's Word when we are complacent and indifferent. Failure to read and to study it renders it ineffective in its purpose for our lives. We displease God when we neglect His Word. God's Word is a treasure, not one to be stored or merely viewed, but one to be read, studied and followed!

Stough is member of First Church, Picayune.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

"Paying the Price"

John 19:6-8, 12-13, 16-18, 28-30, 38-39

By Don Wilson

Just hours remained until Jesus would be left hanging on a cross. It seemed that His destiny had been dumped into the lap of Pilate who now would now be forced to give a final ruling. In an attempt to appease the accusing Jewish leaders, Pilate had given the order for Jesus to be scourged. This all happened before any judgment had been made and without any just cause.

I. BEHOLD THE MAN! John 19:6-8, 12-13

Already the Roman soldiers had mocked Jesus. They had crowned Him with a crown of thorns and put a kingly, purple robe on His back (19:2). They had even bowed before Him and yelled, "Hail, King of the Jews!", but it was just a big joke to them. Pilate must have watched all this with a demeaning, prideful grin on his face.

Now Pilate presented Jesus: "Behold the Man!" (19:5). When the religious leaders of the Jews saw Him, they instantly erupted from their lips: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (19:6). Evidently these words were not quietly or passively spoken, but yelled and screeched by an entire mob of relentless, uncompromising, religious men. The powerful governor of Rome suddenly becomes weak. "You take Him and crucify Him for I find no fault in Him," he said. This is now the third time that Pilate had told these folks that Jesus was without a flaw (18:39; 19:4, here in 19:6).

The initial response of the chief priests was reactive, but the subsequent one was more reflective and honest. "We have a law ... He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God" (19:7). The charge was blasphemy; the penalty,



Wilson

death. Up to this point these religious leaders had no concern for legality, but now they revealed the real issue for them. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and they refused to believe it.

Now fear filled Pilate's heart. Could Jesus possibly be who He claimed to be? Upon re-calling Jesus, he asserted his power to release or crucify Jesus. Jesus gave new information for Pilate about God's power and his power. "You would have no power if God had not given it." Pilate must have trembled even more because again he tried to release Jesus, but then the Jews played their trump card and Pilate caved in. They told him that if he released Jesus he could not possibly be Caesar's friend because Jesus had made Himself King.

II. BEHOLD YOUR KING! John 19:16-19, 28-30

This second, sarcastic presentation of Jesus (19:14) may reveal something of the disdain he had toward these stubborn, persistent people. The cry for Jesus to be

crucified resonated again through the streets of Jerusalem followed by a statement that no good Jew would ever say: "We have no King, but Caesar" (19:15). The question of how these people who were so religious could ever do something so evil and so hard-hearted has been answered. Their allegiance was not to God.

The emphasis in 19:16-19 is not Jesus bearing His cross, not the place where the execution would occur, nor the presence of the criminals on either side. These verses actually point to the next verse—the sign placed over Jesus' head. "JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS!" (verse 19). It was one final stab at the religious elite of the Jews that had used him to get what they wanted.

Jesus knew before His arrest all the things that were going to happen to Him (18:4). Now He knew that everything was now accomplished (19:28). It is interesting that John does not include the details regarding the extent of Jesus' suffering. Only 19:28-30 gives us insight into what John saw. First, he

cried out, "I thirst." John's notation is that this was said in order that Scripture might be fulfilled. Then after someone had put the sour wine-soaked sponge to His mouth, He said, "It is finished," and He died. Jesus knew that His life was finished. He knew that His mission was accomplished. He knew, for the first time, the load of the sin of the whole world.

III. BEHOLD THE BODY John 19:38-39

The King of the Jews was dead! Two secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, were the first to lose their fear. Their fears had caused them to retreat, but as they watched Jesus die, they understood that Jesus was King. Joseph appealed to Pilate for the body of Jesus and he and Nicodemus anointed his body with the one hundred pounds of spices. It was a burial fit for a King because He was their King. And He is still King. Resurrection—the proof of His Kingship — is right around the corner.

Wilson is pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,



no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



THE VILLAGE VIEW

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Honor Roll of Churches

Each January we evaluate the cash gifts received in the financial office of The Baptist Children's Village during the previous twelve months. In this evaluation it has become customary to list the Mississippi Baptist churches in descending order of their designated cash gifts. This evaluation and analysis is known as the "Honor Roll of Churches." During 2002, 500 local churches gave \$1,000.00 or more to the ministry of The Baptist Children's Village. According to our records, those "top 500 churches" were:

No.	CHURCH/CITY	2002 GIFTS					
			83	Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Sandy Hook	\$4,628.82	167	Oakvale Baptist Church, Oak Vale
			84	Anchor Baptist Church, Water Valley	\$4,579.00	168	First Baptist Church, Terry
			85	Trinity Baptist Church, Southaven	\$4,563.24	169	Tomnolen Baptist Church, Eupora
1	Immanuel Baptist Church, Vicksburg	\$28,676.55	86	First Baptist Church, New Albany	\$4,544.44	170	Pinelake Baptist Church, Brandon
2	Temple Baptist Church, Hattiesburg	\$20,645.00	87	Eastwood Baptist Church, Indianola	\$4,479.97	171	First Baptist Church, Calhoun City
3	Morrison Heights Baptist Church, Clinton	\$20,439.68	88	Pine Forest Baptist Church, Collinsville	\$4,478.12	172	County Line Baptist Church, Union
4	First Baptist Church, Corinth	\$17,956.55	89	Park Place Baptist Church, Brandon	\$4,457.00	173	First Baptist Church, Magnolia
5	First Baptist Church, Kosciusko	\$17,331.00	90	Trinity Baptist Church, Philadelphia	\$4,320.09	174	Rocky Point Baptist Church, Carthage
6	Russell Baptist Church, Meridian	\$16,713.00	91	Good Hope Baptist Church, Richton	\$4,311.00	175	Ruleville Baptist Church, Ruleville
7	First Baptist Church, Water Valley	\$16,382.67	92	Liberty Baptist Church, New Albany	\$4,310.00	176	Deer Creek Baptist Church, Rolling Fork
8	First Baptist Church, Crystal Springs	\$16,126.31	93	Trinity First Baptist Church, Waynesboro	\$4,297.67	177	Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Columbus
9	First Baptist Church, Buckatunna	\$14,479.00	94	Hurley Baptist Church, Hurley	\$4,294.71	178	Holcomb Baptist Church, Holcomb
10	First Baptist Church, Richton	\$14,033.60	95	Perkinston Baptist Church, Perkinston	\$4,207.15	179	Main Street Baptist Church, Goodman
11	First Baptist Church, Sardis	\$12,697.59	96	Vaiden Baptist Church, Vaiden	\$4,204.41	180	Greenfield Baptist Church, Greenville
12	West Kemper Baptist Church, De Kalb	\$12,000.00	97	First Baptist Church, Newton	\$4,187.58	181	First Baptist Church, Ripley
13	First Baptist Church, Jackson	\$10,725.35	98	Dry Creek Baptist Church, Mendenhall	\$4,171.00	182	First Baptist Church, Belzoni
14	Rolling Creek Baptist Church, Quitman	\$10,566.06	99	Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson	\$4,153.00	183	Calvary Baptist Church, Greenwood
15	First Baptist Church, Brookhaven	\$10,527.50	100	Fredonia Baptist Church, New Albany	\$4,095.12	184	Tusculum Baptist Church, Booneville
16	Calvary Baptist Church, Waynesboro	\$10,449.31	101	Shiloh Baptist Church, Big Creek	\$4,085.52	185	Midway Baptist Church, Jackson
17	Roseland Park Baptist Church, Picayune	\$9,486.00	102	Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Bruce	\$4,015.00	186	Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Quitman
18	First Baptist Church, Madison	\$9,087.61	103	Emmanuel Baptist Church, Grenada	\$3,999.35	187	High Hill Baptist Church, Philadelphia
19	First Baptist Church, Hazlehurst	\$8,874.00	104	Topeka Baptist Church, Jayess	\$3,929.62	188	North Columbia Baptist Church, Columbia
20	First Baptist Church, Louisville	\$8,757.43	105	Stanton Baptist Church, Natchez	\$3,904.65	189	Eastside Baptist Church, Pearl
21	First Baptist Church, Canton	\$8,605.00	106	Old Silver Creek Baptist Church, Silver Creek	\$3,872.96	190	New Sight Baptist Church, Brookhaven
22	Phalti Baptist Church, Prentiss	\$8,576.81	107	First Baptist Church, Columbia	\$3,800.00	191	West Jackson Street Church, Tupelo
23	First Baptist Church, Gulfport	\$8,473.15	108	Harmony Baptist Church, Walnut	\$3,790.24	192	Grays Creek Baptist Church, Hernando
24	Highland Baptist Church, Vicksburg	\$8,460.00	109	First Baptist Church, Laurel	\$3,777.40	193	Gooden Lake Baptist Church, Belzoni
25	Indian Springs Baptist Church, Petal	\$8,449.36	110	First Baptist Church, Isola	\$3,775.90	194	Alta Woods Baptist Church, Jackson
26	Williamsville Baptist Church, Kosciusko	\$8,446.24	111	Providence Baptist Church, Hattiesburg	\$3,760.00	195	Parkway Baptist Church, Houston
27	First Baptist Church, Picayune	\$8,394.00	112	Central Baptist Church, Brookhaven	\$3,755.00	196	Dublin Baptist Church, Carson
28	First Baptist Church, McComb	\$8,386.55	113	First Baptist Church, Natchez	\$3,670.00	197	First Baptist Church, Batesville
29	Leaf River Baptist Church, Collins	\$8,290.00	114	Calvary Baptist Church, Tupelo	\$3,628.37	198	Newhebron Baptist Church, Newhebron
30	First Baptist Church, Booneville	\$8,248.04	115	Silver Springs Baptist Church, Osyka	\$3,623.00	199	Star Baptist Church, Star
31	Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Newton	\$8,030.02	116	Valley Grove Baptist Church, Tupelo	\$3,603.89	200	First Baptist Church, Charleston
32	First Baptist Church, Union	\$8,010.81	117	Oak Grove Baptist Church, Mendenhall	\$3,551.06	201	Old Pearl Valley Baptist Church, Philadelphia
33	Bunker Hill Baptist Church, Columbia	\$8,000.18	118	First Baptist Church, Runnelstown, Petal	\$3,543.19	202	Oak Hill Baptist Church, Pontotoc
34	Calvary Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	\$7,878.13	119	Indian Springs Baptist Church, Laurel	\$3,513.40	203	Arlington Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto
35	Briar Hill Baptist Church, Florence	\$7,840.00	120	Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	\$3,482.00	204	Prentiss Baptist Church, Prentiss
36	Bethany Baptist Church, Calhoun City	\$7,789.00	121	Oak Forest Baptist Church, Jackson	\$3,447.40	205	Union Baptist Church, Sardis
37	Big Creek Baptist Church, Big Creek	\$7,555.73	122	First Baptist Church, Pascagoula	\$3,427.29	206	Silver Creek Baptist Church, McComb
38	First Baptist Church, Abbeville	\$7,525.58	123	Kolola Springs Baptist Church, Caledonia	\$3,413.86	207	Evergreen Baptist Church, Louisville
39	Topisaw Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	\$7,510.00	124	Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	\$3,390.00	208	Shuqualak Baptist Church, Shuqualak
40	Liberty Baptist Church, Liberty	\$7,319.77	125	Thrasher Baptist Church, Booneville	\$3,378.69	209	Steep Hollow Baptist Church, Poplarville
41	Tylertown Baptist Church, Tylertown	\$7,213.37	126	First Baptist Church, Indianola	\$3,336.00	210	Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Columbus
42	State Boulevard Baptist Church, Meridian	\$7,181.69	127	Unity Baptist Church, Harrisville	\$3,330.90	211	Sturgis Baptist Church, Sturgis
43	North Winona Baptist Church, Winona	\$6,828.76	128	Bethsaida Baptist Church, French Camp	\$3,315.14	212	Fellowship Baptist Church, Ripley
44	Harmony Baptist Church, Crystal Springs	\$6,796.06	129	First Bellevue Baptist Church, Shelby	\$3,300.00	213	Ellistown Baptist Church, Blue Springs
45	Woodland Baptist Church, Woodland	\$6,705.36	130	D'Lo Baptist Church, D'Lo	\$3,287.00	214	Friendship Baptist Church, McComb
46	Gaston Baptist Church, Booneville	\$6,620.69	131	Mantee Baptist Church, Mantee	\$3,270.11	215	Harmony Baptist Church, Pontotoc
47	Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian	\$6,507.45	132	Shiloh Baptist Church, Port Gibson	\$3,245.31	216	Mount Zion Baptist Church, Meridian
48	Parkway Baptist Church, Clinton	\$6,491.66	133	New Haven Baptist Church, Weir	\$3,230.43	217	Berea Baptist Church, Mc Cool
49	Raymond Baptist Church, Raymond	\$6,450.00	134	Skene Baptist Church, Skene	\$3,208.50	218	Emmanuel Baptist Church, Greenville
50	Forest Baptist Church, Forest	\$6,430.79	135	Center Hill Baptist Church, Ecru	\$3,207.46	219	DeSoto Baptist Church, Shubuta
51	North Greenwood Church, Greenwood	\$6,354.02	136	First Baptist Church, Morton	\$3,201.50	220	Arm Baptist Church, Silver Creek
52	Bovina Baptist Church, Vicksburg	\$6,259.50	137	Progress Baptist Church, McComb	\$3,189.50	221	First Baptist Church, Flora
53	Midway Baptist Church, Meridian	\$6,220.00	138	Bucatunna Baptist Church, Meridian	\$3,168.69	222	First Baptist Church, Yazoo City
54	Sylvarena Baptist Church, Raleigh	\$6,145.91	139	First Baptist Church, Mendenhall	\$3,123.00	223	Rocky Creek Baptist Church, Lucedale
55	Sand Hill Baptist Church, Richton	\$6,140.00	140	Fairview Baptist Church, Columbus	\$3,120.00	224	First Baptist Church, Leland
56	Wildwood Baptist Church, Clinton	\$6,122.01	141	Mount Olive Baptist Church, Smithdale	\$3,115.40	225	Branch Baptist Church, Morton
57	Meadville Baptist Church, Meadville	\$6,088.97	142	Carriage Hills Baptist Church, Southaven	\$3,096.01	226	Morgan Chapel Baptist Church, Sturgis
58	Seminary Baptist Church, Seminary	\$6,032.18	143	Rock Hill Baptist Church, Brandon	\$3,095.11	227	Immanuel Baptist Church, Greenwood
59	Rienzi Baptist Church, Rienzi	\$6,001.53	144	First Baptist Church, Columbus	\$3,060.00	228	Ingram Baptist Church, Baldwin
60	Northwest Baptist Association, Hernando	\$6,000.00	145	Pineview Baptist Church, Clinton	\$3,037.00	229	First Baptist Church, Lyman, Gulfport
61	Walthall Baptist Church, Walthall	\$5,891.74	146	Ephesus Baptist Church, Forest	\$3,025.00	230	First Baptist Church, Cleveland
62	Murphy Creek Baptist Church, Louisville	\$5,842.80	147	Riverside Baptist Church, Monticello	\$3,019.00	231	Short Creek Baptist Church, Yazoo City
63	Ackerman Baptist Church, Ackerman	\$5,803.95	148	New Providence Baptist Church, Hazlehurst	\$3,010.00	232	Clear Springs Baptist Church, Louin
64	First Baptist Church, Starkville	\$5,758.27	149	First Baptist Church, Nettleton	\$3,003.92	233	Bethlehem Baptist Church, Walnut
65	Springfield Baptist Church, Morton	\$5,510.00	150	First Baptist Church, Coldwater	\$3,000.00	234	New Prospect Baptist Church, Brookhaven
66	Mount Zion Baptist Church-Tate, Independence	\$5,500.00	151	Lexie Baptist Church, Tylertown	\$2,971.23	235	First Baptist Church, Richland
67	Ingomar Baptist Church, New Albany	\$5,494.39	152	Iuka Baptist Church, Iuka	\$2,965.00	236	Broadway Baptist Church, Olive Branch
68	First Baptist Church, Quitman	\$5,459.09	153	First Baptist Church, Lizana, Gulfport	\$2,953.40	237	Golden Central Baptist Church, Golden
69	First Baptist Church, Greenville	\$5,306.33	154	Causeyville Baptist Church, Meridian	\$2,919.21	238	Christ Baptist Church, Greenwood
70	Parkway Baptist Church, Kosciusko	\$5,241.99	155	Saucier Missionary Baptist Church, Saucier	\$2,906.00	239	Second Baptist Church, Greenville
71	Goodwater Baptist Church, Magee	\$5,051.35	156	Clarke-Venable Baptist Church, Decatur	\$2,904.53	240	Moak's Creek Baptist Church, Summit
72	First Baptist Church, Brandon	\$5,035.82	157	First Baptist Church, Vancleave	\$2,900.00	241	Zion Hill Baptist Church, Blue Springs
73	New Harmony Baptist Church, Blue Springs	\$4,935.26	158	Beulah Baptist Church, Inverness	\$2,866.11	242	Crystal Springs Baptist Church, Tylertown
74	Macedonia Baptist Church, Myrtle	\$4,933.00	159	Spring Creek Baptist Church, Philadelphia	\$2,852.35	243	First Baptist Church, Waynesboro
75	East Philadelphia Baptist Church, Philadelphia	\$4,844.65	160	First Baptist Church, Amory	\$2,845.01	244	First Baptist Church, Senatobia
76	First Baptist Church, Clinton	\$4,808.02	161	Westwood Baptist Church, Meridian	\$2,841.98	245	Interstate Baptist Church, Shaw
77	Wheeler Grove Baptist Church, Corinth	\$4,755.67	162	First Baptist Church, Eupora	\$2,837.96	246	New Hope Baptist Church, Gulfport
78	Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Brookhaven	\$4,738.00	163	Macedonia Baptist Church, Tupelo	\$2,835.13	247	Highland Baptist Church, Senatobia
79	Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Mendenhall	\$4,720.00	164	Society Hill Baptist Church, Oak Vale	\$2,826.92	248	Macedonia Baptist Church, Brookhaven
80	Chunky Baptist Church, Chunky	\$4,642.00	165	First Baptist Church, Purvis	\$2,780.00	249	First Baptist Church, Mathiston
81	Memorial Baptist Church, Richton	\$4,638.75	166	Foxworth Baptist Church, Foxworth	\$2,777.27	250	Ludlow Baptist Church, Ludlow
82	Mount Zion Baptist Church, Columbus	\$4,634.91					

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES



VOLUME 1 • A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COMMISSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

ISSUE 2

JIMMY PORTER,

Author, "Do We Still Need Affirmative Action?"

GEORGE A. YANCY,

Author, "The Rewiring of Sony"

REVA WOOD, Author, "Love: Fundamental Ingredient of the Christian Life"

Author, "The Samaritan in Jesus' Story"

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...THAT WORD!

BY JIMMY PORTER

"Do we still need Affirmative Action?"¹ is the cover story for the January 27 issue of Newsweek. One news article reads, "Lawsuits threatened over NFL minority hiring practices."² Another states, "Sterilization group called racist for paying addicts not to give birth."³ Yet another says, "Black leaders spar over Pickering."⁴ The common thread or better yet the common word in all these articles is that word **Racism**. It is a word that will not go away because it describes a condition that permeates every segment of our society.

Racism is no respecter of persons in that it infects us all. Author George A. Yancy writes, "We live in a racist society. Racism is not found only way down South or in certain neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the phenomenon of racism is part of what makes America what it is. It is our history and our culture. . . I cannot ignore the realities of racism in our society, so sometimes in reaction, I act or think in racist ways. I want to think that racism is something that is only found in those groups of individuals that we tend to think of as bigots. But now I am forced to be honest. It is in me as well."⁵

Most groups have developed their own idea and working definition of racism and who is and is not a racist. The Webster New World Dictionary of American English defines racism as "a doctrine or teaching, without scientific evidence that claims to find racial differences in character, intelligence, etc., that asserts the superiority of one race over another or others. . . ." We all say, "Well, that's not me because I don't feel that way," and we speak the truth of our hearts as best we understand it. White supremacist ideology is not acceptable, but one must not take comfort in believing racism no longer exists. Charles Colson said, "Certainly evil is to be expected in a fallen world. What is not expected is for a holy people to accept it." George Yancy also said, ". . . the sin pastors and the church neglect most is racism."⁶

Has racism remained because we have assigned our government the responsibility to remove it from our lives? There was much wisdom in President Bush's remarks made on January 20, 2003 to those gathered at First Church of Glenarden, Landover, Maryland as they celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. He said, "There are still people in our society who hurt. There is still prejudice. It is fitting we must understand that government can help . . . but it cannot put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in their lives." This is why the Southern Baptist Convention observés Race Relations Day the second Sunday in February. The theme for this year is "Who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29.

The story of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10 teaches us that the color of one's skin, the style of one's worship nor one's status in life should be determining factors in how we relate to that person. I John 4:20 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does

not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

As a Christian community we cannot neglect the

command of Christ to expand His Kingdom which must include all races. In a July 2002 survey Gallup asked blacks and whites which of the following groups could do the best job in improving race relations in this country. The responses among the blacks were: federal government, 17%, state government, 12%, local government, 13%, religious organizations, 26%, local schools, 17%, business in your area, 7%. The whites responded: federal government, 14%, state government, 8%, local government, 13%, religious organizations, 22%, local schools, 30%, business in your area, 4%.

The survey indicates that 78% of the white and 74% of the black community feel other entities are more adept in addressing racism than religious organizations.⁷

The Samaritan in Jesus' story did not make excuses not did he try to dodge the issue before him. He saw a human being suffering and he responded as a Christian. Even though we will emphasize race relations on February 10 this year, that is not enough. It is a task that requires our being sensitive to the needs, hurts, and the disadvantages of others each day of the year, not just one.

Michael Thurman writes, "To love others is easier said than done; however, we must manage to incorporate it into our daily lives. We must wrestle with, ultimately, overcome, our prejudices that we bring to bear on the relationships we form with others. Our love for others must be based on our recognition of them as having desires and needs just as we do, as having basic sameness as we, or having a truly transcendent

reality about themselves as we do."⁸

Here are some things we can do. First, pray thanking God for the progress that has been made

in racial reconciliation and ask Him to help us identify the racism that is in our hearts. Also, pray that He will reveal to us how we might get involved in the work of racial reconciliation.

Perhaps one of the most positive things we can do is to take the time to hear the heart of those who have been hurt by racism. Then seek to help that person find the peace and joy of Christ as we demonstrate Christ's love to them. Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd," John 10:16. One day that word racism will not exist. May the Lord hasten that day.

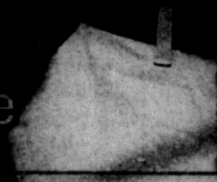
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1 Newsweek, January 27, 2003.

2 USA Today, January 23, 2003, pg. 1C.

3 The Washington Times, January 13-19, 2003, pg. 12.

4 The Clarion Ledger, January 23, 2003, pg. B1.

5 Beyond Black or White, George A. Yancy, 1996, Baker Books, pgs. 14-15, 14-15.

6 Ibid., pg. 22.

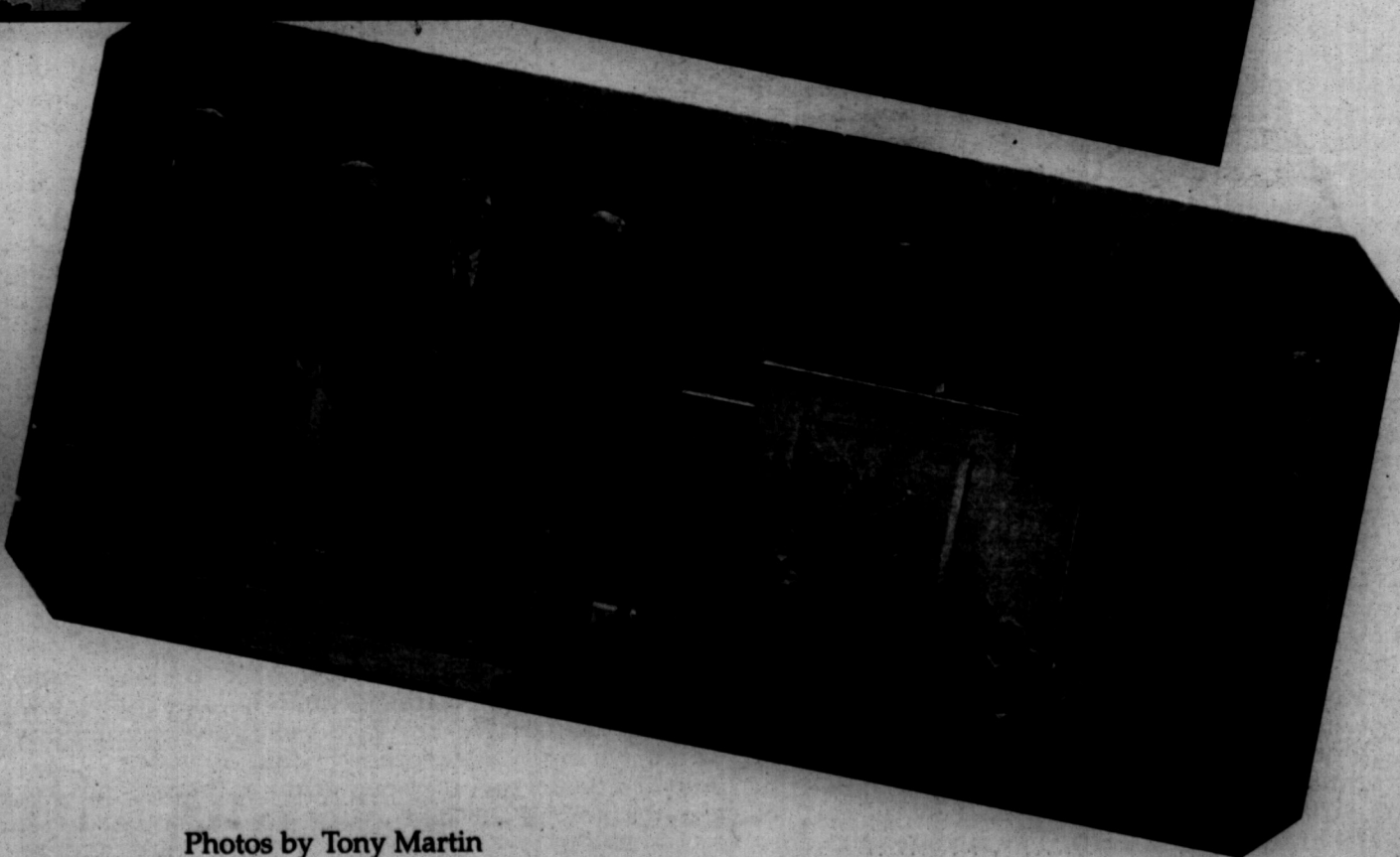
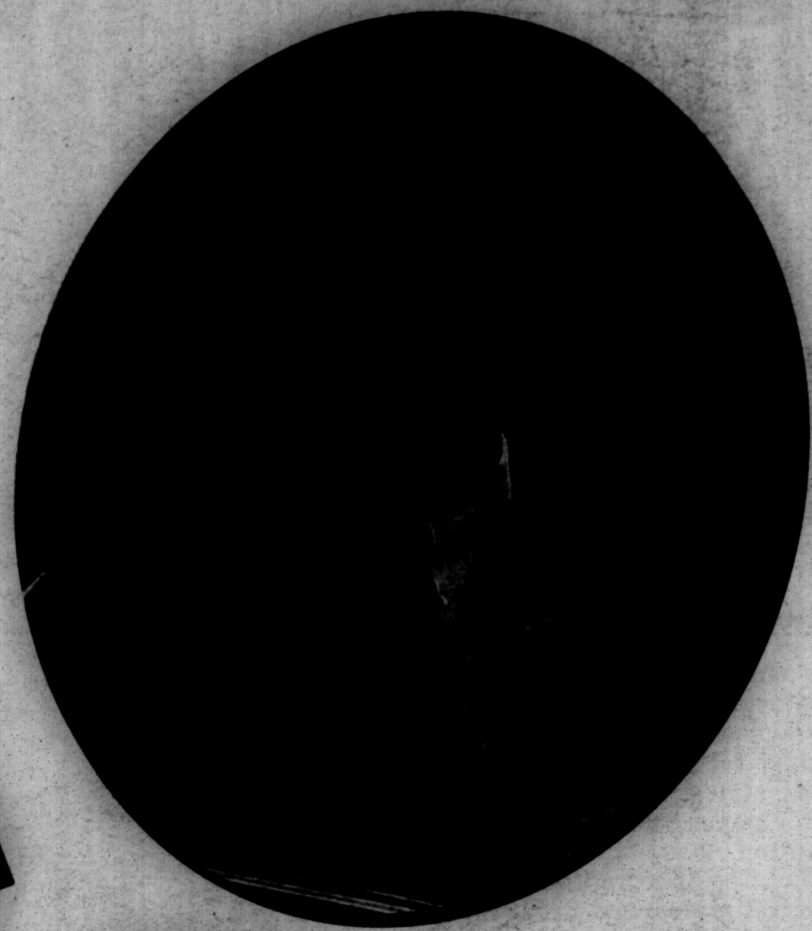
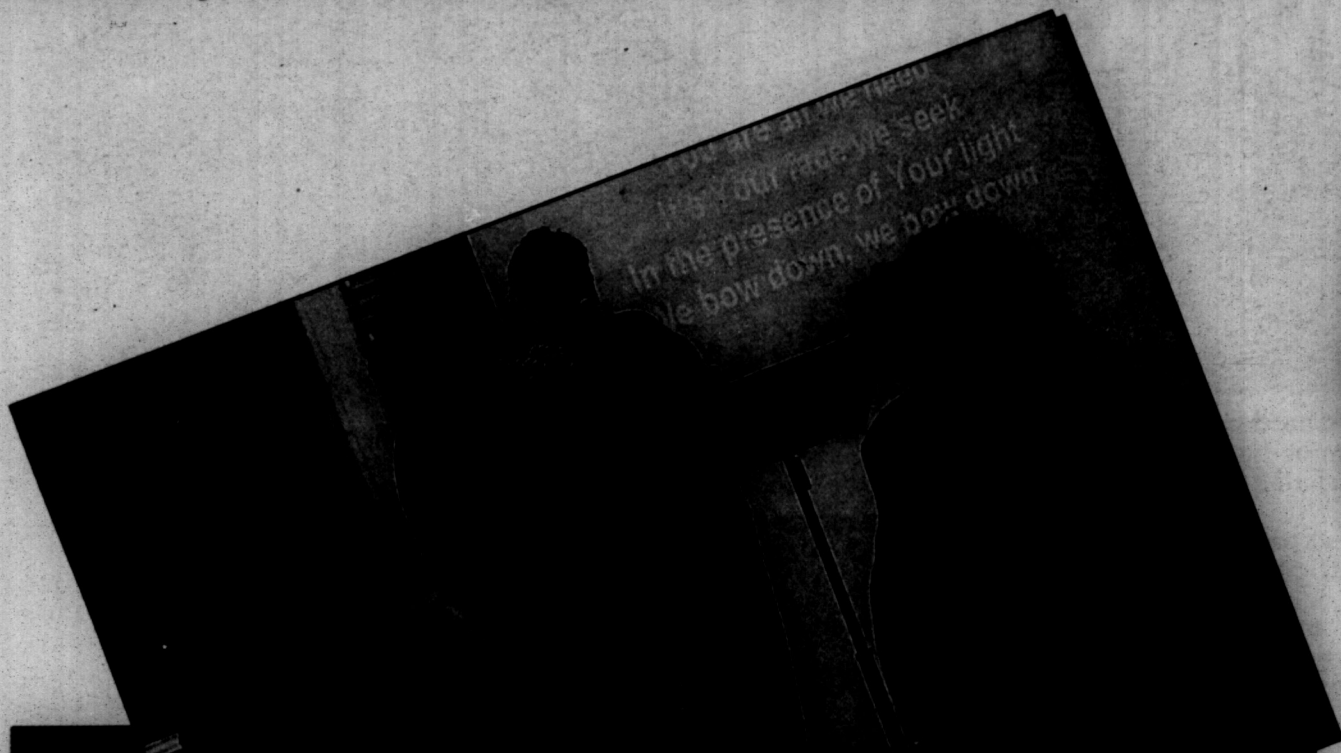
7 Life Light, Feb. 2003, Culture Response Kit, ERLC.

8 Love: Fundamental Ingredient of the Christian Life, Michael F. Thurman: 2000, Broadman and Holman, pg. 68.

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